

MISAWA! Cat Burgler! KOBASHI! Mark the Shark Shrader! KANEMOTO! Wreckless Youth! PSICOSIS! and other stuff I saw and heard this week!

Howdy!

Welcome to DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #27! It's been a big week of tape watching as I began it intending to have a full blown Lucha Fest 97, since I had 9 (!) tapes of Lucha that I had partially or totally not seen yet, so I was going to watch all these and make a mini's compilation since HELL! why not? Of course three tapes in and I had exactly one mini's match on tape, so so much for that.:) I also got a bunch of Mid-Atlantic Independent Wrestling (CHEETAH!!! TIM!!!) and you gotta support the indies, so I started watching those for a while and THEN I got a tape from Glenn which had GAEA and NJ/NWO AND TWO (!) Ohtani matches, so I watched those immediately! With this much stuff I'm definately gonna wait until next week to yammer about the GAEA (which RULED THE FREAKING WORLD.) and BattlARTS (which is actually amazingly good in spots) so the nCo minions of Champ Forum can get their copies and join me in the yammerfest.:)

-I watched the Misawa/Kobashi Triple Crown match (GLENNNNNN!!!!!!) and GOLLY did it rule! Kobashi finds ways to continuously get out of the weenie doghouse and this time he does it by doing the TRULY HELLISH RELEASED BRAIN BUSTER. I had never seen that one before and had never seen a wrestler allow his own vertebrae to be crimped like that, but hey! That's the price you pat to be the Man.:) Misawa was brilliant as usual and there were so many little things to love about this match (except the finish) that I don't know where to start. The basic thrust of the match was that each one would take turns driving the other deeply onto their heads via an assortment of spinal-chord-severing released German suplexes and what have you. Misawa sells "near-death" like a freakin GOD for a minute there after Kobashi has put him through the ringer, and Kobashi actually tried a little subtlety in his selling after the second Tiger Driver (which looks really tame now, ESPECIALLY after Misawa hit the released German suplex which Kobashi can make look like attempted homicide). As one would expect it builds to about as hot a finish as you can get since these guys work so freakin stiff, so gradually the slowing of the workrate into the psychology drenched last ten minutes of nearfalls make them ALL look like they could definately be the finish. My beef is that after the highly complex finish, with each elaborate combination of suplexes and powerbombs and counters leading to logical extension in the next move and countermove, to finish it off with a Misawa elbow is sort of a letdown. I mean he did that to Tamon Honda last week, right? Well, I guess it didn't bother me too much because this is still a great match. My favorite thing about this match is that it has ten moves that are so stiff that they would kill Hulk Hogan, and I find that comforting as justification for watching Japanese wrestling as anything else I can think of.:)

I watched the Jun Akiyama/Akira Taue surprise match:) and it was more interesting than good. Taue just isn't the one to do an effective Exploder suplex on. He's too big and lumpy and doesn't land real pretty like everybody else.:) Akiyama was impressive as always, but you could tell Taue wasn't digging the putting-over-the-punk idea, as Taue wasn't as sharp as he has been lately and was slapping Akiyama in the head and what have you. This wasn't a horrible match

and it was kinda neat in parts, but it's just unseemly to watch the 12 year old spunky Jun getting all fired up and psyched when the man across the ring exudes such innate (and inert) stoicism. I mean Taue isn't the best wrestler in All Japan but he is the second most stoic and thus the second coolest. I dunno- stick Akiyama in a feud with Kobashi so it isn't so apparent and then Jun can work up the coolness food chain: Kobashi-Williams-Kawada- Taue-Misawa.:)

-I watched a batch of mid-atlantic independent promotions- one being the ECWA (somewhere in Pennsylvania with the card actually taking place in Delaware. TIM RULES! and he LOVES my dogs!:) and the Leader (YES!!) sent me the bonanza batch of MEWF from Baltimore (I think!) so I saw all the young highflyers that everybody up there yammers about but I never see. The prognosis for Junior Heavyweight wrestling in the US is quite good if these matches are an indication. I saw Mark the Shark Shrader, (W)Reckless Youth, Billy Kidman, Adam Flash, Earl the Pearl, Devon Storm, Steve Corino, Romeo Cassanova, and the Cat Burgler all within a twenty-four hour span, so comparisons can definately be made- though these assessments may change as I finish watching both batches of tapes.:) The one I would definately keep my eye on (excluding Kidman since we all know what he is capable of) is (surprisingly) (W)Reckless Youth in ECWA and the Cat Burgler in MEWF, I would say. (W)RY is quite the heat machine and seems like he can work and was trying some unique stuff, my fave being the vertical abdominal stretch with the added headstretch, made famous by OOOCCCTTTOOOOGGOOONNN back when he used to wrestle (as opposed to SUCK). He sold well, did some tricky midlevel highspots and had about the best psychology of the two wads of indie wrestling I watched. The Cat Burgler was fabulous I thought. Very sharp in his execution, inventive in his moves, competently hit his fair to middling array of upper echelon highspots, was decent at telling a story, his workrate was good if not great. He could get stiffer and learn a wider array of mat moves, but the potential seemed there (of course I have about five more of his matches to go, so the jury is definay=tely out.:)) Steve Corino looked good in the one match I saw with him. He's kind of a goofy heat machine, but he hit a couple of decent mat moves and flies well. He needs to put on some weight, because to be as small as Rey Misteri Jr, you have to springboard twenty feet to the floor on a regular basis (or be a magnificent bastard like TAKA) to get away with it.:) Adam Flash was a spot machine, as his matches were Devon Stormesque in their lack of story and psychology. His spots were fair though still basically moves that Psicosis would use to SET UP his high spots.:) The only Devon Storm match I saw on these so far is against (BARF!) Jim Powers and God! does he stink! So poor Devon is in with a roided out megastiff and Devon can't do any spots and has to put Power's fat useless ass over anyway. (HEY! That must have been his WCW tryout. He passed with flying colors. Mr.Nash. Mr Hall....:) Earl the Pearl I wasn't impressed with and Casanova seems too green to tell. All in all, it will be fun watching these kids grow and I hope all you folks who are going to the Mid-Atlantic Super J Cup have a good time (and get me a tape.:))

-I watched a KICK ASS Kanemoto/Jericho vs Liger/Samurai match (GLENN!) where, as always in a Kanemoto match, the point is to be the world's biggest dick. Once again the award goes to WILDLY resurgent El Samurai who is getting to Togo-esque terms of bad-assness. Liger was as great as Liger always is, slapping the punks around and being Godlike in so many ways, but Kanemoto is BACK and it RULES! WOO HOO! The Stiffness! The Surliness! The Sun-In to

bring out his highlights! It really gets no better than this! He is equally as awesome in the Takaiwa/Ohtani/Kanemoto vs Liger/EI Samurai/Honaga match with the angry old guys using age and guile to outsmart their youngster opponents. EI Samurai does a major selling faux pas by basically no-selling a Death Valley Drop by Takaiwa but it may have been that the young fella move to his next spot too quickly (which actually was probably the case). Kanemoto brings out the bastard in Ohtani and Takaiwa has the makings of a great bastard, so this match was pretty dang perfect. WHO DO I HAVE TO KILL TO SEE TAKA MICHINOKU VS KOJI KANEMOTO!?!?

-I watched the Rey Misterio Jr camcorder tape of him, Jericho and Psicosis wandering around Japan and it was pretty interesting in a weird travelogue kinda way. Psicosis look REALLY FREAKIN..... normal without his mask.:) Jericho seems like the kind of guy you would want to hang around. He seems like a real goofball, in a good way.:) The two matches on the tape are pretty good for a WAR houseshow, I guess. Damian and UD trade fabulous comedy spots and Psicosis tries to kill himself a couple of times. These two matches are nice enough but the strong selling point of the tape is sights and sounds of Japan through the eyes of young men who are fascinated by the snow on the ground and everything else. Plus Jericho is a riot.:)

-Nitro ruled this week. I thought it was funny that they stuck a zillion angles in the undercard matches of SuperBrawl at the last minute. The Makenko/Syxx part was great, I thought and actually worked in heating this baby up, I think. Calo/Rey was the best they have done so far against each other. Konan/Guerrero was pretty choice. The Steiners of Hazard (tm-somebody!:) had me thinking- "Last week the Cornette angle, this week a Lawler angle. Hmmm... what is a trademark Dutch Mantell angle?:)" The TV title thing was very odd. Does this mean Rey gets the TV title at Superbrawl and loses it back to Regal? How did Rey get mixed up in a Regal angle? Where will this leave laukea? Will King Curtis come back? Will Sullivan run through the woods and disappear?:) I have weird feeling that they stumbled across the key to getting the Women's Division over, and she used to be Miss Texas. The good thing is that she may spark interest in a women's feud that could get over. The bad thing is that SOMEBODY that I hold dear from GAEA is gonna have to put her over. Or maybe we will luck out and only Medusa will have to do it.:) I dunno- Chigusa could guide her along and get her to the point where she could become a credible brawler, I guess.

NEXT WEEK: THE ASS-STOMPING GAEA Champ Forum! The good BattlARTS Champ Forum! That Ass-load of Lucha Libre I scratched the surface of (LOREFICE!)! The rest of Mid-Atlantic IndieMania! Buff Bagwell and KOJIMA Blow a ZILLION spots and sorta make up for it in their next match! NWO buys New Japan and other things! YES!

NANIWA~!